

Veterans News

NEWS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

USDVA Extends "Agent Orange" Benefits to More Veterans *Parkinson's Disease, Two Other Illnesses Recognized*

Relying on an independent study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki decided to establish a service-connection for Vietnam veterans with three specific illnesses based on the latest evidence of an association with the herbicides referred to Agent Orange.

The illnesses affected by the recent decision are B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease.

"We welcome the addition of these illnesses to the list of those already associated with Agent Orange," said Roger Brautigan, Acting Secretary for the California Department of Veterans Affairs. "It is only right that veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange, and are now suffering from these illnesses be provided an easier path to obtaining their benefits and needed healthcare."

Used in Vietnam to defoliate trees and remove concealment for the enemy, Agent Orange left a legacy of suffering and disability that continues to the present. Between January 1965 and April 1970, an estimated 2.6 million military personnel who served in Vietnam were potentially exposed to sprayed Agent Orange.

In practical terms, veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a "presumed" illness don't have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This "presumption" simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

The Secretary's decision brings to 15 the number of presumed illnesses recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA).

"We must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will," Shinseki added. "Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence."

Other illnesses previously recognized under the USDVA's "presumption" rule as being caused by exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War are:

- Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy
- AL Amyloidosis
- Chloracne

- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers, and
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)

Additional information about Agent Orange and USDVA's services and programs for veterans exposed to the chemical are available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

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